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## ABSTRACT

This document presents a model used by the Davis School District (Utah) to revise their comprehensive guidance program. The model addresses the four primary purposes of education (essential learning skills, civic responsibility, career preparation, and personal development). Counselors collaborate with individual students and their parents to form a plan of action called the Student Education Plan/Student Education Occupation Plan (SEP/SEOP). The SEP/SEOP provides an individual educational framework that guides students from kindergarten through graduation. Steps are presented for a self-guided computer tour of SEOP, which was designed for students and parents to work through at home. The electronic SEOP ensures that comprehensive guidance is an integral and necessary part of every student's learning process. (JDM)

# Revising and Enhancing the Davis School District Comprehensive Guidance Program: Working Together Works

by

Diann Davis

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## Chapter Eighteen

### **Revising and Enhancing the Davis School District Comprehensive Guidance Program: *Working Together Works***

*Diann Davis*

*Davis School District, Farmington, Utah*

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

—*Eleanor Roosevelt*

“Working together works” was the attitude that fostered the beginnings of comprehensive guidance success in Davis School District. Now, after several years, comprehensive guidance has soared to new heights with enhancements and revisions that were once only dreams in the minds and hearts of many Davis educators. Davis district has proven that “working together works” applies to everyone, not just the counseling staff.

The Model for Public Education in Davis School District was designed under the direction of Superintendent Dr. Darrell K. White and a committee of Davis district directors. This model became the conduit for enhancing and revising our comprehensive guidance program. Comprehensive guidance naturally became integrated within the school system rather than being just a department in each school. The model is extracted below; a complete, detailed description of the Model for Public Education will be provided upon request.

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### **Model for Public Education**

#### ***Purposes of Public Education***

Public education has the mandate to develop within the hearts and minds

of each new generation the qualities of a moral populace, strong scholars, committed citizens, and active workers. The founding fathers knew that without these qualities, provided through public education, our nation would not long endure. The Davis School District accepts this mandate and focuses its work around the four primary purposes of public education: Essential Learning Skills, Civic Responsibility, Career Preparation, and Personal Development. Educators collaborate with individual students and their parents to form a plan of action (SEP/SEOP) which ties these four primary purposes to the needs and goals of the student through the instructional process.

### *Essential Learning Skills*

Educated individuals possess broad-based knowledge in an array of subjects, including communication (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), mathematics, science, social studies, music, art, and foreign languages. Additionally, educated individuals learn the processes that enable them to think in complex ways and to solve problems. The combination of well-developed essential learning skills in communications, mathematics, etc., and effective problem skills provides the foundation for lifelong learning in diverse situations.

### *Civic Responsibility*

An understanding of civic ideals and citizenship responsibilities is critical to full participation in society, and is one of the central purposes of public schools. It is important that these concepts be introduced early and students given the opportunity to practice them in the school setting. As students move through the school experience, they will expand their ability to analyze and evaluate the relationship between societal ideals and practice, and be able to see themselves taking civic roles in their communities. Graduates should be able to recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens, identify societal needs, and participate in setting directions for public policy. They should learn by experience how to participate in community service and political activities. Civic responsibility requires a commitment to collaborate with others in solving problems and working to support both individual dignity and the common good.

### *Career Preparation*

Citizens who are employable and economically productive are essential in our democratic, free enterprise system. Therefore, another important purpose of public education is to prepare young people for the world of work. An employable individual, in our rapidly changing world, is one who is capable of learning new skills and changing careers as needed. Career preparation is a lifelong process of investigating employment options and exploring, developing, and refining one's career interests and skills.

### *Personal Development*

As individuals mature through public education, they learn to be self-starters, to be responsible for themselves and their own behavior. They learn to be resilient and to work from an internal focus of control based on their own individual moral and ethical convictions. Additionally, they have the opportunity to develop creativity, spontaneity, and expressiveness by having diverse experiences in a variety of areas such as music, visual arts, drama, sports, crafts, photography, service, etc. These experiences also help develop the reflective ability to self-monitor their interests, progress, and relationships. In other words, one of the responsibilities of public education is to insure that students have the opportunity to achieve personal satisfaction, enjoyment, and maturity by providing a variety of experiences in areas of personal interest.

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### **SEP/SEOP (Student Education Plan/Student Education Occupation Plan)**

The SEP/SEOP is the individual planning process that guides students through their education. This helps ensure that their goals in the four major purposes of education are achieved. The SEP/SEOP provides an individual educational framework for each student that guides them from entry into kindergarten through graduation. The process brings together the students, parents, and school officials to plan, monitor, and manage each student's learning experience.

SEP/SEOP conferences consist of a review of each student's strengths and accomplishments followed by a plan to reach goals in each of the four major purposes of education. This process helps to ensure that students will graduate with the skills, knowledge, values, and commitment to lifelong learning necessary for successful and satisfying adult lives.

The Davis School District Strategic Plan identified the need for more effective SEP/SEOP conferences. The Superintendency Goals also identified SEP/SEOP as a priority for enhancing and revising the learning process. Representatives from several departments from within the district developed a new electronic system that is designed to focus on the four purposes of education in the Davis model. For a number of years our students have been setting school-related goals during their SEOP. Our Model for Public Education recognizes that learning experiences go beyond school, so students now include both educational and out-of-school goals.

Individual planning (SEP/SEOP) has been in place for a number of years in Davis district. Elementary teachers facilitate SEP conferences in consultation with the counselor. Secondary counselors have the primary responsibility to

facilitate SEOP conferences for each student. Identifying SEP/SEOP as the individual compass for every student released the educational potential and power of individual planning. It is now recognized and utilized as a vital and necessary part of the learning process for every student.

Parent involvement is a priority in Davis district. Through the Internet, parents have an immediate avenue to connect with their children's education. They can view details of their children's current grades in each subject or class. Information on future assignments, attendance, and tardies is also available. Security for individual student information is protected with passwords. At home, students can explore, research, and make decisions with their parents prior to the SEOP conference. A self-guided tour of the SEOP was designed for students and parents to work through together at home. The tour offers (a) on-line assessments, (b) resources to guide and support decisions for the individual SEOP, (c) career paths, and (d) recommended courses for individual four-year plans. This part of the Davis District SEOP is available to anyone through the Internet. A portion is reprinted here.

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### **Self-Guided Tour of the SEOP**

On this tour, you can find out how to develop an education and career plan to help you reach your goals. You can also pick up useful tips on job hunting, resume writing, and interviewing techniques. Feel free to leave the tour at any time to find out more about a subject just by clicking on the highlighted text.

1. Develop a Student Education Occupation Plan, better known as an SEOP. Think about what you want to do and find out more about the kind of training, education, and skills you will need to achieve your education and career goals.
2. Assess your Career Interests and Work Styles. Think hard about what you enjoy, what you are good at, what kind of Personality you are, and the values you hold.
3. Research the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Find out more about the nature of the jobs that interest you, such as educational requirements, salary, working conditions, future outlook, and anything else that can help you narrow your focus. Research America's Job Bank for occupational information in your local area including company name, address, and contact name.
4. Compare your skills and interests with those of the occupations you've selected. The career that matches your skills, interests, and personality the closest may be the career for you.

5. Develop an education plan to meet your career goals. This plan may include Career Pathways beginning in 9th grade. These pathways help you explore your Career Interest Area as well as prepare you with the Essential Skills & Knowledge Standards (DESK) needed to be successful. Develop the transferable skills necessary for success in both school and the world of work. Review study skills for high school students and for middle level students needed to be successful in the classroom. Review your individual learning style using the Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire.
  6. Review the four components of the Senior Project.
  7. Explore a career interest area by participating in a Job Shadow activity or Career Internship.
  8. Select a School that offers a college degree or training program that best meets your career goal and financial needs. Find out about College and University Admission Requirements.
  9. Find out about Financial Aid to help support you in obtaining your career goal. Review Scholarship information which may help you obtain your education goal.
  10. Learn about Job Hunting Tips as you prepare to graduate or move into the job market. Prepare your Resume and practice Job Interviewing techniques.
  11. Go to your counseling guidance center or career center At Your School for additional information and help on career planning (Davis School District, 1999).
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Some of the websites on our tour are specific to Davis School District, others are generic. We welcome you to use our self-guided tour of the SEOP. Our tour has inspired many to create their own quality educational experiences for their students, parents, and teachers. Educational success is enhanced as we all share our resources.

Success or failure depends more upon attitude than upon capacity. . . . Successful men act as though they have accomplished or are enjoying something. Soon it becomes a reality. Act, look, feel successful, conduct yourself accordingly, and you will be amazed at the positive results.

—Dr. DuPree Jordan, Jr.

The electronic SEOP is a success story. Comprehensive guidance is now recognized as an integral and necessary part of every student's learning process.



The model is in place and tools have been developed for implementation. Counselors, administrators, teachers, and parents continue to receive training to utilize the SEOP. Individual schools have organized teams and committees to implement and integrate the new SEOP. Teachers use SEOP goals to make meaningful connections with their curriculum.

As an additional support to SEP/SEOP, considerable resources were dedicated to remodeling and updating all counseling and career centers. Reception and waiting areas, adequate secretarial space, conference rooms, storage, career centers with many computers, and inviting counselor offices were constructed. New furnishings were also part of this extensive commitment. Career centers in 20 secondary schools have been remodeled. The three remaining schools are scheduled to remodel their counseling and career centers.

The electronic SEOP and career centers produce evidence of success. However, the student and parent commitment to ownership of SEOP is the most meaningful success. Students access their data during classroom and individual SEOP sessions, or at their convenience. They can enter and update their goals for school involvement and out-of-school activities within each of the four purposes. It is also important for students to update their accomplishments continually.

In the past, students and parents were often asked, "Have you had your SEOP?" Some interpreted this conference as simply a yearly school expectation. They never clearly understood the connections between classroom curriculum, experiences out of school, and the SEOP. Today questions and answers concerning the SEOP go beyond the completion of a conference. They focus on student goals and plans that fulfill the purposes of education:

- What is your SEOP in Essential Learning Skills/Knowledge?
- What is your SEOP in Civic Responsibility?
- What is your SEOP in Career Preparation?
- What is your SEOP in Personal Development?

Students, parents, and teachers now have instant access to the student's goals, needs, and accomplishments. Growth, change, consistency, and curriculum-completion skills are all available. The entries a student made from 7th through 12th grades are all available to view but changes can be made for the current year only.

The places I hiked to! The road that I rambled to find the best eggs that have ever been scrambled! If you want to get eggs you can't buy at a store, you have to do things never thought of before.

—Dr. Seuss, *Scrambled Eggs Super*



## **New Program Initiatives**

Enhancing and revising could focus entirely upon changes, improvements, and a higher level of sophistication within the existing program. This process is essential to sustain excellence. But another form of enhancing and revising goes beyond fine tuning into the realm of creation.

Five years ago Davis School District held only the vision and goal of a K-12 comprehensive guidance program. The secondary program had measurable data to substantiate the benefits of that program. A small elementary pilot program began with limited funding. Dreams became an immediate reality when we were awarded two separate grants from the federal government—one Federal Safe and Drug Free Schools Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Grant, and one grant from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. These grants provided the funding to transform the elementary comprehensive guidance program from a long-range plan to a reality in each of our 51 elementary schools.

The comprehensive guidance model provided the immediate structure to establish the program in every school. Administrators received comprehensive guidance training. A few had to be converted to a model that allocated considerable time for class curriculum. They thought a counseling program should be limited to individual and small-group counseling for identified students. Soon after the program began, principals and teachers observed positive behavior changes as students began applying the skills the counselors were teaching. They acknowledged the value of everyone receiving the curriculum. Skills were reinforced throughout the school. Siblings, friends, and school personnel reminded one another to apply the skills the counselor had taught. Data collected in each school gave evidence that violations of school rules and negative behavior were decreasing. Other districts using the curriculum also reported positive behavior changes.

Students relate quickly to the guidance curriculum because lesson objectives are reinforced with children's literature. Davis District elementary counselors used research, risk, and resiliency factors as they wrote the curriculum. For the past two years all elementary principals and teachers have responded to a survey about comprehensive guidance. Every school responded overwhelmingly that curriculum is the most important part of comprehensive guidance. Counselors submit monthly reports used for program management and accountability purposes. Curriculum reports summarize which lessons were taught, which grades received the lessons, and how many classes were taught within each grade. Responsive services reports detail the number of small groups held, the number of students attending, and the number of individual students counseled. Students in individual and small group-counseling must have

permission forms signed by their parents before they can attend. We also keep records for the students that need to see a counselor for an immediate need. If it is determined that they need additional counseling, they must have a permission form signed by their parents.

Elementary counselors have numerous opportunities for staff development. They meet monthly with all counselors in the district and once a month with just elementary counselors. They are also assigned to a small group of counselors with an experienced counselor as a mentor. Quarterly they meet with junior high and senior high counselors within their feeder patterns.

All of our counselors know the challenge of meeting immediate student needs and honoring their established scheduled calendar. The phrase "rigidly flexible" can serve as a guide to identify the true priority of a quality program. "Rigid" means a commitment to guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. "Flexible" means recognizing the legitimate immediate needs of a student and responding with a caring, helpful experience.

Staff cooperation and creativity must be present for the rigidly flexible philosophy to work. Professional judgment will help draw the fine line between the student and the schedule. The final decision will come when the question is asked, "What is best for the student?" A cooperative philosophy can quickly adapt the planned rigid schedule into a flexible student-counselor experience.

Part of the Model for Public Education became our structure for responsive services. The acronym COMPASS represents individual student needs and goals. Each letter in the word has been used to provide counselors with a structure as they guide students in solving their immediate needs:

Calm Yourself

Objective (What do I want to accomplish?)

My Support System (Who can help me in a positive way?)

Plan (What am I going to do?)

Act (Carry out the plan.)

Summarize (What worked well, what didn't work.)

Successful Future Plan (What will I do next time?)

This model provides counselors with a format to guide students in an unscheduled but necessary time. Each concept can also be used in more detail and depth for small groups or classroom presentations. Our counselors adapt this model developmentally to guide students in grades K to 12. Students should benefit as they move through each grade using this model to help make decisions.

No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.

—St. Ambrose

## Keys to Success

Let us never fail to recognize the heart and soul of program success. The program was developed for *students*. The program includes *parents* and *counselors*. The program involves the *school board*, *administrators*, *teachers*, *directors*, *information technology*, and *community*. A huge support system is also a major part of this success. The heart and soul of comprehensive guidance is dedicated, caring, and visionary people working together. The student who creates an individual plan, the secretary who schedules and reschedules, the parent who has an avenue to connect with his or her child, the school board and administrators who understand and support comprehensive guidance, the counselor who is amazed at the amount of work that can be accomplished in a year, and numerous others who contribute to the success of comprehensive guidance are all part of this important program.

I chose to address this topic because of my desire to recognize and honor many remarkable people. They have extended countless hours of work and immeasurable caring to our process and product. I continually observe their efforts to provide the best possible educational experience for Davis School District students. If space had permitted, I would have listed acknowledgments. These individuals are the true authors of this chapter. I extend my sincere appreciation to all of our caring team. Davis School District continues to promote the idea that “working together works.”

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world.  
For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

—Margaret Mead

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### *About the Author*

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